

## **PRESS RELEASE DATED 15<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2008**

SOUTHLAND basketball will chase a high profile New Zealander and a classy import to play for the provincial men's team next year in another step towards its NBL dream.

Southland Basketball Association chairwoman, Jill Bolger, said that sort of personnel would be needed to assemble a "really serious" Southland Flyers team for the Conference Basketball League in 2009, which is a grade below the top domestic competition, the National Basketball League (NBL).

Bolger said her organisation's plan would be made possible through ongoing assistance from the Invercargill Licensing Trust.

The ILT and the ILT Foundation have confirmed joint funding of \$60,000, which Bolger said was vital because it allowed the SBA to have a professional administration base headed by a paid development operations manager and an office manager.

"The importance of having the professionalism within the organisation, and that is having paid players and paid employees, is essential," she said.

"Because we have a plan to make our men's team our flagship team, as they used to be.

"The ILT and ILT Foundation money will support that plan."

ILT president, Alan Dennis, said basketball had always been a high profile sport in Southland and his organisation was pleased to work with the code's administrators to try and develop it further, especially the men's team.

Bolger said exact details of the CBL had yet to be confirmed but she thought it would start about the middle of next year. She also confirmed that the SBA was still exploring the possibility of making a bid to field a team in the NBL, possibly as early as 2010.

But the initial aim was to lift the profile of the Southland Flyers next year to give the region's young basketball-playing males something exciting to strive for.

"At the moment we have a lot more young men who are staying in Invercargill and who are not as academically minded as the many young women, who are moving out of town and going to university," Bolger said.

"So we have to provide for those young men, otherwise they will get to that 18 or 19-year-old age group and leave the sport. We can't afford for that to happen. So having the Southland men's team as our flagship basketball team would be something for those guys to aim for and it would keep them playing basketball."

**PRESS RELEASE ENDS**